

Maya, Aztec and Inca notes

Maya

- Lived on the Yucatan Peninsula (modern day Guatemala, Southern Mexico, El Salvador, Belize, and Honduras)
- Lived in the lowlands and rainforest
 - Used canals and terracing
- Mayas share many features with other civilizations because of the high degree of interaction and cultural diffusion
- The decline of the Maya is still a mystery
 - Many people believe it was environmental- drought or food shortage

Aztec

- Settled on Lake Texcoco (present day Mexico City is built on top Aztec ruins)
- Main city was *Tenochtitlan* which means place of the *nopal* and was an artificial island
 - It was a very sophisticated city with aqueducts to store water, drainage systems, paved streets, bridges, and a canal system
- The Aztecs were instructed by one of their gods to build their city where they saw an eagle standing on a cactus clutching a snake in its talons...
 - ... which happened to appear on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco
- To create more farmland the Aztec built *chinampas* or “floating gardens”
 - *chinampas* are raised beds separated by canals which allowed farmers to move through them on canoes
 - *chinampas* were very fertile and yielded 7 crops annually (ESY beds yield approximately 2-3 per year)
- Corn was a staple crop and the Aztec ground corn into flour using a *metate*
- The Aztec were conquered by Herman Cortes

Inca

- The Incan empire was the largest in Pre-Columbian America (spanned from the southern tip of modern day Colombia, through Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile to the northern part of Argentina)
 - Lots of different climate zones- from rainforest to cloud forest to desert
 - Varied types of growing zones at different altitudes
- The Incas lived in the Andes Mountains and built terraces to adapt to the steep terrain
 - Terracing also had sophisticated irrigation
- Staple crops were quinoa, corn, potatoes
 - Over 4,000 varieties of potatoes are native to Peru